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Roundup

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Zvezda launch propels station assembly into high gear

Symbolizing the perseverance of many, the Russians, July 11, not only ignited the launch of a Proton rocket carrying the crucial Zvezda Service Module into orbit, but also ignited a new phase in International Space Station assembly.

Hardly an indication of the tremendous role the mission plays in the life of the ISS, Zvezda launched uneventfully just before midnight at 11:56 CDT Tuesday, July 11, from launch pad 23 at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The slender white vehicle, propelled by a Russian Proton booster, disappeared from view over the horizon within minutes, leaving behind a smiling, optimistic crowd of onlookers on the ground.

"We're doing what we said we're going to do," said NASA Administrator Dan Goldin. "I'm so proud of this NASA team and the teams from Russia's space agencies and our international partners. These are the pioneers. And every NASA employee, every NASA contractor should celebrate. We all did it together. It's wonderful."

Only 15 minutes into its mission, the new module was safely in orbit, its antennas, solar arrays and other exterior equipment perfectly extended.

"You just don't know how rewarding it is to see the culmination of so much hard work come together in a successful launch like we had today," said Bob Cabana, International Space Station Program manager – International Relations. "What our Russian partners have accomplished in spite of all of the difficulties they've had is truly amazing. We have our work cut out for us, but this is truly a team effort."

In the days following the launch, ground controllers reported the module was performing normally.

"Our Service Module team has been on this difficult path a long time and today's flawless launch brings us a tremendous sense of accomplishment and relief," said Gordon Ducote, NASA Service Module Launch Package manager. "In the next few months, however, we still have a big job to do to get ready for the first permanent crew. Someone once told me, 'You know, we do some really incredible things in this business.' Well, this joint Russian/American team did a pretty incredible thing and my hat's off to them."

During the module's first two weeks in orbit, the Zvezda was to undergo additional verification tests and rendezvous burns. Flight controllers from the

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NASA JSC Photo 2000e18564

Mark Ferring, an ISS flight director, and Alex Moore, an ops planner, on duty in the Johnson Space Center's Mission Control Center during the launch operations.

NASA celebrates first partnership with Russia

NASA Photo AST-5-301

Astronauts Tom Stafford and Donald Slayton and Cosmonaut Aleksey Leonov greet each other in Soyuz Orbital Module.

As the Zvezda service module continues toward its rendezvous with the International Space Station, Americans and Russians can look back 25 years to the beginning of their first space partnership. On July 15, 1975, Apollo and Soyuz spacecraft launched from different hemispheres on their way to a docking in space.

The Apollo-Soyuz Test Project was the first human space flight mission managed jointly by two nations. It was designed to test the compatibility of rendezvous and docking systems for American and Soviet spacecraft in order to open the way for future joint human flights. There were a number of difficulties that both nations had to resolve in the mission design before they could assure a safe docking of both spacecraft and an on-orbit meeting of crewmembers. The technical challenges included different measuring systems, the different spacecraft and thus mating adapter designs, and different air pressures and mixtures.

The mission began with the Soyuz launch on July 15, 1975, followed by the Apollo launch seven hours later. The docking in space of the two spacecraft took place at 2:17 p.m. U.S. central time on July 17. Two days worth of joint operations followed.

The mission was a resounding success for both Americans and Soviets. They achieved their goal of obtaining flight experience for rendezvous and docking of human spacecraft. ■

NASA's History Office has published a Web site commemorating the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project. You can review it at http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/astp/index.html.

SHARP students spend summer at JSC.

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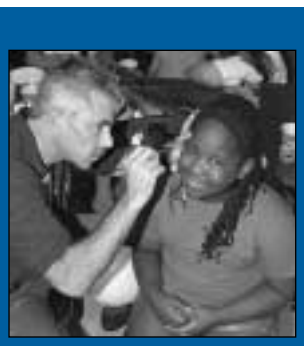

Heritage Week gets everyone involved.

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JSC Open House seeks volunteers.

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